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1928

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Swarthmore Lecture, 1928

THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

BY

JOHN S. HOYLAND, M.A.

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Preface

The Swarthmore Lectureship was established by the Woodbrooke Extension Committee, at a meeting held December 7th, 1907 : the minute of the Committee providing for "an annual lecture on some subject relating to the message and work of the Society of Friends." The name "Swarthmore" was chosen in memory of the home of Margaret Fox, which was always open to the earnest seeker after Truth, and from which loving words of sympathy and substantial material help were sent to fellow-workers.

The Lectureship has a two-fold purpose : first, to interpret further to the members of the Society of Friends their Message and Mission ; and, secondly, to bring before the public the spirit, the aims and the fundamental principles of the Friends.

Preface

The Lectures have been delivered on the evening preceding the assembly of the Friends' Yearly Meeting in each year. The present Lecture was delivered at Friends House, London, on the evening preceding the Yearly Meeting, 1928.

A complete list of previous Lectures, as published in book form, will be found at the beginning of this volume.

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THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

I

THERE is an hour of the Indian night, a little before the first glimmer of dawn, when the stars are unbelievably clear and close above, shining with a radiance beyond our belief in this foggy land. The trees stand silent around one, with a friendly presence. As yet there is no sound from awakening birds ; but the whole world seems to be intent, alive, listening, eager.

At such a moment the veil between the things that are seen and the things that are unseen becomes so thin as to interpose scarcely any barrier at all between the eternal beauty and truth and the soul which would comprehend them. As we listen with the waiting world, we hear, feel and see the Divine meaning and purpose beating through this outward universe of time and sense. And we rejoice exceedingly ; but always with a little pain—because there are no words, for ever, in which to tell others this splendour of God which we have seen.

II

At such times of vision, through contact with God as He is revealed in nature, there comes to

the listening soul a conviction of the fundamental and eternal truthfulness of the belief that all this external universe is merely the means through which eternal values are being expressed and manifested. Since it is needful for purposes of clear thinking to affix labels to systems of thought, it is desirable to call this conviction a direct personal belief in the essential truthfulness of Platonism.

The greatest of all Plato's sayings, and the gist of his whole system, is to be found in the *Republic* (517): "The Idea of the Good" (this in the *Republic* is Plato's name for Him whom elsewhere he calls directly God) "is the universal Author of all things beautiful and good, Parent of light, and the immediate Source of reason and truth." For Plato, that is, all beauty, truth and goodness, as we see these things around us on earth, are a manifestation, however dim, of an eternal fact, the only true fact in the universe, the fact of God.

And in the *Timaeus* Plato makes the great kindred affirmation: "Let me tell you why the Creator made this world. . . . He was good, and He desired that all things should be good, and nothing bad."

III

Platonism is not an ancient philosophy, one of many, a mere curiosity to be revived only by the enquiring student. It is a system of thought which, as has been pointed out again and again in recent

years, is at the heart of the historical development of our Christianity. More than this, it is an attitude of mind which is essential to our modern thinking, if we would see and rejoice in the Light of Christ.

There is, I believe, the very deepest need that the Children of the Light should come to have a better knowledge of this great and beautiful system of belief. Dean Inge, in his recent book of essays,¹ has written that the Quakers, in whose thinking the Light has always been prominent, "will seek to give to mysticism an intellectual or philosophical expression, endeavouring to find a place for spiritual illumination in their view of God, the world, and the self. This will bring them definitely into line with the long and honourable succession of Christian Platonists, their affinity to whom they have been rather slow to discover; while their active participation in social work will tend to keep speculation in touch with concrete realities." It is profoundly to be hoped that this forecast will come true.

Another modern writer has remarked, and with truth, that "if all that moves in the world to-day, as has been said, is Greek, the prime mover of most of it is Plato."

It will be well therefore that we should turn for a short time with reverent attention to the thought concerning God and the world of this greatest of thinkers and seers: for with a due

¹ "The Church and the World," p. 92.

recognition of the meaning of his system, it will be possible for us to realise more fully the glory of the Light of Christ.

IV

For Plato the only ultimate reality is God, Who is absolute and perfect beauty, truth and goodness. He is, and always has been, at work in the universe, expressing through it His own nature, seeking to create in it beauty, goodness and truth. Wherever we see a flash of these eternal things, we see God expressing Himself a little through the heavy medium of material necessity. We see Himself, since He is Spirit, and Spirit is not divided into Here and There, into Less and More. We see the Light which is indeed Divine, because it is God's own being.

Thus the Platonist goes through the world continually recognising, with the most perfect joy (for there is no joy like the joy of the recognition of God), the divine presence, in deep spiritual reality, in every manifestation of beauty which he may see around him, in every proclaiming of truth, in every act of goodness.

The Platonist perceives himself to be set in a universe extending infinitely in space and time, but shot through by another type of reality, by another spiritual universe, which exists outside space and time. This is the universe of God, of the personal Spirit of goodness, beauty and truth, whose reality is always and everywhere the same;

and who succeeds in His eternal work of self-expression, sometimes more completely and sometimes less completely, but always in a thousand thousand different ways and through a thousand different media.

This universe of God breaks in upon our world, and expresses itself through our world, just as the sun's radiance acts upon a veil of falling moisture to create a rainbow. The moisture in itself is cold, dark, dead. Much of it can have no share in the making of the perfect rainbow ; but here and there are truly formed drops which can catch the light aright, and reflect it to our eyes in its true splendour. The sunlight meets the moisture only for an infinitesimal fraction of time ; for the two are moving in different planes, and at great speeds. In a thousandth part of a second the moment of illumination has passed for the drop of moisture, and it falls to the ground. But it has done its work. It has shown the true glory of the sunlight ; and though the individual drops have gone, the rainbow endures in splendour.

All such illustrations drawn from the external world are obviously unsatisfactory ; but this parable of the rainbow will serve to show the outlook of Platonism. There is the Light of God, Who is perfect beauty, truth and goodness. And there is our universe of matter, which yet has in it at a thousand thousand points the capacity for reflecting, for manifesting, for living forth, the Divine splendour. Wherever on earth there is the slightest beginning of beauty, truth and

goodness, there is a manifestation, however imperfect, of the Divine Light. And to some souls—to the Children of the Light—it is given to stand away from the process, and in the Beatific Vision to see the rainbow as a whole, the vast universe showing forth in one perfect arch the ineffable glory of God.

V

The parable of the rainbow takes us but a little way. At the heart of the Platonic system is the assertion that in the three-fold Divine nature—beauty, truth and goodness—goodness is supreme: and that beauty and truth are to be judged by the standard of goodness only (*Republic*, 452, etc.). As we should put it, God is Love; and the truth apprehended by scientist, philosopher or historian, with the beauty seen and expressed by artist or poet, are in their expression and their fruits to be judged by the standard of the Divine Love.

Moreover, to Plato in his movements of deepest insight the Light is always personal, and its self-expression is always in such moments spoken of as the working of a universal personal will. "This is in the truest sense the origin of creation and of the world. . . . God desired that all things should be good, and nothing bad." (*Timaeus*, 30.)

VI

To the Platonist therefore this world of ours, which presses in upon us with such insistency of material things, is in its real significance like the

curtain of falling moisture which is acted on by the sunlight when we see a rainbow. It is pierced through, as it falls, by the splendour of the Light Divine, which is the creative activity of the Eternal God, seeking to kindle in this world, and above all in our spirits, His own likeness of beauty, truth and goodness. For the activity of the Light is, as Plato insisted over and over again, an activity for the creation of Godlikeness. We are set in the world that we may become like God—not merely that we may understand His Being and share His purposes; but that His beauty, truth and goodness, His Light, His own Life, may shine through us, making us—a little at least—like Himself, forming us into the organs of His manifestation. The world is a huge workshop of beauty, truth and goodness; and wherever these Divine things are shown forth, there God is present, at least in some degree.

VII

It is essential that the Children of the Light should understand this Platonic outlook upon the universe, if they are really to comprehend the meaning of the Light of Christ, which is the groundwork and substance of our faith. "Platonism is part of the vital structure of Christian theology. . . . It is utterly impossible to excise Platonism from Christianity without tearing Christianity to pieces"—so speaks the greatest English Churchman of our own day.¹ Back

¹ Inge, *Plotinus*, I, 12, 14.

through the centuries there has been a succession of men who have consciously realised the debt of the Faith to the great thinker of Athens ; and there have been very many more who perhaps never heard of Plato, and yet were unconsciously genuine Platonists. In our own time we must above all have a reasoned faith ; and therefore there is paramount necessity that all who would be true children of the Light should fearlessly and without prejudice go back to this great Forerunner of Christ, who saw the truth so plainly, and expressed it in words of such enduring grandeur and beauty. We must read Plato for ourselves. We must feast on his teachings ; for they are as fresh and living to-day as when they were first delivered to his students in the garden beneath the shadow of the Acropolis.

VIII

There is one feature in the Platonic teaching, in addition to those considered above, which is of major importance for the believer in the Light. The fact that men are capable of comprehending and aspiring after the eternal verities of beauty, truth and goodness, is to Plato proof that the soul of man comes from God : that we have lived in contact with Him before we came into this world : and that we have as an inalienable part of our soul's nature the power of " recollecting " the converse which we enjoyed in the blissful spiritual realm.

“ In the heavenly choir we were perfect and untainted by the evil which awaited us in time to come, and perfect too and simple, and calm and blissful were the visions which we were solemnly admitted to gaze upon in the purest light, being ourselves no less pure. . . . Every man’s soul has, by the law of his birth, been a spectator of eternal truth.” The memories of this time when we dwelt in heaven persist in every soul, though they may be to many unconscious memories. They are to be found in the spontaneous joy with which we welcome what is genuinely beautiful, good and true : in the immediate assent which the soul gives to the supremacy of these values. There are perhaps not many who keep these memories genuinely fresh ; but the memories are there, in all of us. In every human soul there is the capacity for the Divine reality. As Wordsworth says :

Not in entire forgetfulness
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, Who is our Home

In all of us, and in all mankind, there must occur the awakening of these powers of recollection ; and when that awakening occurs—when a man recognises in spontaneous acceptance the sovereign excellence of beauty, truth and goodness, affirming the supremacy of these eternal values with the unqualified assent of his own soul, then there comes the beginning of the soul’s return

to God, and a joy beyond all mortal speech. For the soul is bound at last upon her journey Home, to the blissful realm of God from which she came.

"The soul goes to another place, excellent, pure and invisible, to the presence of a good and wise God . . . and on its arrival there, it is its lot to be happy, free from error, ignorance, fears, wild passions, and all the other evils to which human nature is subject."

This return of the soul is not to be regarded as occurring only after death. It is an inalienable right in the present life, because we come from God, and have in us the faculty of "recollection" regarding His spiritual nature. "When the soul giveth heed with her proper faculty, she is at once away and off into that other world of Purity, Eternity, Immortality, and things unchanging, and finding there her kindred, she leagueth herself with them."¹

There is thus, for Plato, an inalienable element in us which links us to God and to His realm. It is the "memory" of the Home from which we came; and that Home is indeed God Himself. We must stir this faculty of "recollection," in ourselves and in others; for as it is stirred, we return to our Home.

To the student of Plato it will probably appear that there has been, throughout the history of the English Children of the Light, an unfortunate tendency to confuse this faculty of "recollection," this capacity for God and for eternal truth which exists in the heart of every man, with the Light

¹ Plato, *Phaedo*, 79.

itself. The Light, it must be insisted, is not a faculty or a capacity. It is the Divine likeness dwelling with living reality in the world and in the souls of men. It is God Himself.

IX

The great teaching concerning the Return of the soul is strongly emphasised in the greatest of all Platonists, Plotinus. He lived six hundred years after his master, in a world which was rapidly breaking up under the disintegrating influence of internal decay and of barbarian inroads from without. In consequence Plotinus dealt much with the necessity for the soul's finding its way back to its true abode. "We must ascend again towards the Good, the Desired of every soul. Anyone who has seen This, knows what I intend when I say that it is beautiful. . . . And one that shall know this vision—with what passion of love shall he not be seized, with what pangs of desire, what longing to be molten into one with This, what wondering delight." (I, 6, 7.)¹

"Not he that has failed of the joy that is in colour or in visible forms, not he that has failed of power or of honours or of kingdoms, has failed, but only he that has failed of only This, for Whose winning he shall renounce kingdoms and command over earth and ocean and sky, if only, spurning the world of sense from beneath his feet, and straining to this, he may see." (I, 6. 7.)

¹ The quotations are from Stephen McKenna's translation of Plotinus (Medici Press).

“ Let us flee then to the beloved Fatherland : this is the soundest counsel. . . . The Fatherland to us is there, whence we have come, and There is the Father.” (L, 6, 8.)

“ In all his pain the truly happy man asks no pity. There is always the radiance in his inner soul, untroubled, like the light in a lantern when fierce gusts beat about it in a wild turmoil of wind and tempest.” (I, 4, 8.)

Plotinus is equally insistent with Plato upon the fact that this escape of the soul to its Home is not merely an affair of ecstatic mystical vision, or of esoteric discipline, but is an effort of the will to share God's moral purpose, and thereby to partake of His inner nature of essential goodness. “ The soul's escape from evil is in attaining likeness to God, that is, becoming just and holy.” (I, 2, 1.) As the Children of the Light have in all ages consistently maintained, there can be no true mystical experience of God which is not accompanied by a growing likeness to God in spirit and character, by a sharing of His will of love towards all that He has made.

Again, Plotinus teaches, as emphatically as Plato himself, that there is in the soul the innate capacity for realising the Divine values. “ There exists no single human being who does not, either potentially or effectively, possess this thing—the perfect life.” (I, 4, 1.)

Finally, in Plotinus we find many exalted pieces of description concerning the supreme joy of the soul's return to her home : “ All interval

disappears ; the soul advances, and is taken into unison, and in that association becomes one with the principle (of the universe)—but not to its own destruction : the two are one and two. In such a state there is no question of stage and change ; the soul, without option (but by right of its essential being) . . . has become one simultaneous existence with the Supreme.” (IV, 4, 2.)

X

Thus, behind our modern belief in the Light, there lies the immense volume of witness which we call Platonism. It teaches us that our world is the medium for the self-expression of God : that God is the universal Spirit of beauty, truth and goodness : that God is to be known by our souls because they come from Him, and because they are intended in His purpose to return to their Home in Him. It teaches us also that we are set here that we may love the beautiful, the true, and the good : and that in so loving we may become like God, and gain here and now eternal life, as His Life, which is the Light of goodness, truth and beauty, is kindled to bright shining within us.

It is to be repeated once more than Platonism is not to be thought of as a philosophy, one of many, all of which may be more or less true, and more or less interesting to the student of philosophy. Platonism is still the breath of life to those who would rise above the futilities of our hurrying existence into the truth of things.

As a simple and practical expression of its

teaching, we may take a maxim which I have seen attributed to Sir Oliver Lodge: "I refuse to believe that it is given to man to conceive of anything that is better than the reality of things." We must go through life holding fast to the conviction that the beauty, truth and goodness which we see around us in the world, and which our own hearts bid us spontaneously and joyfully to approve, are the manifestations of an eternal reality which is continually at work breaking its way into freedom in our universe.

To those who maintain that such a system of thought has no message for them, one can only speak once more of the experiences of unspeakable joy which come to the soul, especially in contact with the beauty of nature, when the veil is stripped aside, and the infinite multitude of the stars above, the first flush of the dawn, the radiance of moonlight, the comradeship of the trees, become a living whole—the triumphant and perfect manifestation of the beauty, the truth, the love of God.

These things must be seen to be believed.

XI

There are many to-day whose minds, in relation to any ultimate problem, incessantly demand an answer to the question, "How." It is becoming increasingly possible for such to believe in a universal spiritual principle working through what we call the material organisation of the universe.

The emphasis which is being laid upon the effectiveness of the maternal instinct, and upon various forms of co-operation, in the development of higher forms of animal life and wider phases of human association, is but one aspect of this tendency to trace the control of what may be called spiritual principle in the creation and uplifting of our race. In his latest book, for instance, Dr. McDougall says that only one of the instinctive tendencies, "the tender, protective impulse, seems so wholly good that we cannot have it in too great strength."

Again, it is becoming increasingly clear that the progress of scientific discovery constitutes a re-thinking of the thoughts of God. It signifies an increasing power of recognising God as Truth, and of estimating and appreciating aright His values in regard to the manner in which spirit is organising matter in the universe of Here and Now. The old barren materialism is gone—vanished so completely that the fundamental constitution of matter itself is now believed to be energy rather than anything which the thorough-going materialism of fifty years ago would have recognised as matter. The way is open, as never before, for a re-statement, even from the scientific point of view, of our conceptions regarding the fundamental nature of the visible universe, and for a re-statement which shall essentially be expressed in spiritual terms, as dealing with energy and direction.

If there survives any of the old Nietzschean

attitude, which exalted ruthless self-serving as the method of progress, it is becoming abundantly clear that such a view is utterly untenable when regarded from the standpoint of racial evolution. Man only advances—the Nietzschean himself only came into existence—as the devotion of the mother ensures, and has ensured from far back in pre-human days, a longer and longer period of immaturity for the offspring, wherein fresh powers may be acquired and practised.

But the Children of the Light need not wait for such external confirmation of their deepest beliefs, however welcome it may be when it comes. They speak of that which they know, of that which they have seen and heard, of the fundamental values, the “Why” of the universe. To them the “How” may be of fascinating interest; but it can never be the true meaning of the whole, just as the true meaning of a great organ is not to be found in the cunning construction of its pipes and stops, but in the music which the creative hand and mind of a Master can bring forth through it into perfect expression.

XII

The work of the artist—poet, painter or musician—deals, or should deal, with the expression of the Divine beauty, as the work of thinker or scientist deals with the revelation of Divine truth in a re-tracing of God’s purposes and a re-thinking of the methods by which He fulfils those purposes.

Plato speaks of the sovereign brightness and radiance of Beauty amongst the Divine Ideas, and of the unique fashion in which it captivates the mind of the beholder. We shall rejoice, therefore, with the keenest delight whenever the inner faculty of our soul, its "memory" of eternal things, stabs us into awareness that in picture or poem or musical composition there is a "break-through" of the undying Beauty.

Especially, perhaps, in regard to music is this experience to be anticipated; for here the connection between the beauty and the material vehicle of its expression is more slender than in the case of the other arts, whilst the realm of beauty with which music deals is in some mysterious way more ultimate and fundamental, so that often, as we listen, the veil of matter is stripped suddenly and completely aside, and we step forth straight into the Elder World.

The Children of the Light will rejoice at every fresh advance which the skill of artist, poet or musician can achieve in the expression of the Divine Beauty through means visible or audible to our outward sense; and, provided that the work in question be a genuine advance, they will eagerly welcome its witness. They will welcome, too, the witness of the Divine artistry in nature.

But however much strength and comfort they may derive from such outward manifestations of Beauty, the Children of the Light will seek their own chief witness elsewhere.

XIII

There is still another word to be spoken regarding Platonism, before we pass on.

At the heart of the Platonic system is the thought of the City of God, and the conviction that men's lives are given to them in order that they may build that city on earth.

Plato said, "In heaven there is laid up a Pattern of the City of which we are the founders; he who desires may behold that Pattern, and beholding may take up his abode therein," (*Rep.* 592); and he urges his hearers to "look at the City which is within". He teaches that the task of the man who would be truly like God, through the bending of all his energies to fulfilling God's purposes of beauty, truth and goodness, is above all the task of creating on earth a society, a realm of moral relationships, in which those purposes shall as far as possible be achieved.

Plato himself wrote two long and wonderful treatises on the manner in which this, the true function of human life, may be fulfilled. Not only so; but he abandoned all his other activities and went away to Sicily, in response to an invitation which seemed to offer him an opportunity for putting his ideals into active operation; and there he almost lost his life in consequence of his loyalty to those ideals. Ever since his day, this teaching, so faithfully put into practice, concerning the City of God has been of immense significance for human progress; and in at least one great epoch of history it has governed

the ideals and the activities of great masses of men for long centuries together. It clearly links up with the Christian teaching regarding the Kingdom of God ; and therefore it shall some day conquer the world.

At Daulatabad, in India, there is an immense hill-city, surrounded by seven concentric lines of fortification. We may think of the City of God in this way. The inner citadel will be our homes, defended and fortified from every vestige of harm by the Spirit of God, whose fruits are love, joy, peace. Beyond this inner citadel will be concentric fortresses, the group of our friends who are engaged with us upon the tasks of the City, our religious society, those whom we touch in our daily activities for the City, and so forth. The farther we go from the central citadel the wider our influence will be extended, and the less effective it will therefore be. But the whole City will be walled round by truth, beauty and goodness.

Again, we may think of the City as universal, rather than as an affair of our individual lives, or of one locality. It is a City of all ages and of all races, which each of us has the responsibility of helping to build by the activities of his own single life. It is a universal City whose Pattern is in the Will of God, and whose reality on earth is continually coming nearer.

That City is the true Fatherland of the Children of the Light. Its patriotism transcends all lesser loyalties ; and for it they know themselves

called to live and die ; for it is the hope of the whole world. Progress comes for humanity as its ideals become realities.

XIV

It is time to pass on to a brief consideration of the witness to the Light which comes from India.

There are numerous lines of thought along which one might deal with this topic ; but in the vastness of the Indian religious literature there is one book which for every true Hindu shines like the moon amongst the stars ; and that is the *Gita*.

It is impossible to exaggerate the prestige enjoyed by the *Gita* in India. It forms the daily devotional reading of many thousands of earnest seekers after truth, including Mahatma Gandhi himself. It is constantly referred to, in all manner of discussions, as a sovereign authority upon spiritual matters and an infallible guide to religious truth. Its pages are searched through and through again for principles upon which social, religious and even political movements may be based in our own modern age. It would be an understatement to call the *Gita* the New Testament of the Hindus, because the average Hindu attaches to it far more authority, as a guide to the practical affairs of life, than the average Westerner attaches to the New Testament.

A study of the *Gita* will lead us, I believe (paradoxical as the view may seem when one

considers the Indian reputation for pantheism), to the realisation that the most characteristic witness which the Children of the Light may expect to derive from the highest achievements of the Indian religious genius, is the teaching that the reality behind the universe, which shines upon mankind in the Light, is personal and redemptive.

There are in the *Gita* a number of passages of a strongly pantheistic cast ; but those of this type upon which the Hindu mind dwells most readily are passages already tinged, in spite of their pantheistic colouring, with a strong sense of the personality of the Supreme : for example, " He who seeth Me everywhere, and seeth everything in Me, of him will I never lose hold, and he shall never lose hold of Me." (VI. 30.)

None the less, these pantheistic passages are not really characteristic of the *Gita*, through whose pages there runs a triumphant assertion, not merely of the personality of God, and not merely of the fact of incarnation, but of God's exceeding closeness, loveliness, and winsomeness. " I am the Father of this universe, the Mother, the Sustainer, . . . the Holy One . . . the Path, Husband, Lord, Shelter, Lover . . . Home " (IX, 17-18). " Thus shalt thou be set free from the bonds of fate : harmonised through self-forgetfulness ; and through striving for union with Me, thou shalt come unto Me." (IX, 28.) " They verily who worship me with trust and love, they are in Me, and I in them " (IX, 29). " Therefore at all times think upon me only. . .

With mind and reason set on me, without doubt thou shalt come unto Me" (VIII, 7). "He who doeth his duty for Me, whose supreme good I am, my devotee . . . without hatred for any being, he cometh unto Me" (XI, 55). "They verily who partake of this wisdom of immortal life, endued with faith, I their supreme object, filled with love and trust for Me, they are surpassingly dear unto Me." (XII, 20.) "By trust and love man knoweth me in essence, Who and What I am : having thus known Me in essence, he forthwith entereth into the Supreme : though ever performing all actions, taking refuge in Me, by My grace He obtaineth the eternal Home" (XVIII, 55-6).

XV

The Western reader cannot study the *Gita* without being repelled by what appears to him its dangerous ethical doctrines, especially in regard to the teaching that if the caste-duty is done "without desire for the fruits of action," then evil deeds are to be permitted—even to the killing of one's relatives and friends—in the course of the performance of that caste-duty.

Again, it is hard sometimes to forget the unworthy tales regarding Krishna which fill the *Bhagavadpurana* and other similar scriptures, though here the Hindu might reply that there are also unworthy stories regarding Jesus Christ (though of a different type of unworthiness) to be found in our own apocryphal writings.

But, on the other hand, there is much that we may learn from the great ethical message which rings through the *Gita*, that duty must be done for its own sake alone, without anxiety for results. And the devotional message of the *Gita* is unquestionably one of the great spiritual assets of mankind, a message which is for all ages and all races. Especially as the Christian reads it, must he be filled with shame at the thought that his own love for Christ is so poor and thin when compared with the trust and love which this Hindu saint, so many centuries ago, felt for God as he had come to know Him.

The mind which produced this book—we know no name for its author—had plunged into the profoundest depths of the philosophy of the Absolute, and had drunk in the subtlest and most secret lore of Indian pantheistic mysticism. But it had sought on unsatisfied.

Then had come a great revelation, which we Christians can well comprehend. The soul of the writer had been “converted” to a simple and adoring faith in a glorious Divine saviour and friend, one who was close to him, who could be apprehended by the love and trust of the simplest of humankind, who knew his weaknesses and troubles, who could love him and uplift him, who wore human flesh, and yet was One with the Supreme.

It is easy for the Western critic to point out the weaknesses in the *Gita*, and the manner in which its faith and love differ from our own. But

it is surely of more importance that we should recognise the extraordinary loftiness and greatness of this supreme aspiration of the Indian religious genius, and give thanks to God that His Spirit wrought thus marvellously in India so long ago.

There rings through this wonderful little book a note of unmistakable certainty, the glad shout of the soul which has Found, which has been gripped by the living truth, and has learned by secret and wholly joyful experience that the Eternal God, the Supreme Principle of truth, intelligence and joy (for it is thus that the Hindu sages name the fundamental attributes of the Divine), may be met with and known in contact with a living Personality, who understands and strengthens, loves and saves.

XVI

The most famous verse in the *Gita* runs as follows : " Whenever there is decay of righteousness and exaltation of unrighteousness, then I myself come forth : for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness, I am born from age to age," (IV, 7-8).

This is not, of course, the Christian view of Incarnation—much painful argument has been expended on the attempt to make it perfectly clear to the Hindu that this is not the Christian view. But again it will be well if we can concentrate our attention upon the positive aspect of the question, upon the fact that this great teaching

represents the conviction of a supremely great thinker, and of a spiritual genius of the first order, regarding the sovereign truth that God is not only a Person, instead of a merely negative Absolute, but that He is a Person who loves us, and desires to serve us, effectively enough to come amongst us wearing our flesh, and to come amongst us for our redemption from evil.

That verse from the *Gita* is the crown of the Indian search after God. To it the devout Hindu always returns, however deeply he may have penetrated into the *arcana* of metaphysics. It is the very heart and crown of the greatest and most precious document of his faith.

The fact that the Hindu religious genius reached this conclusion regarding the necessity not merely for the Personality of God, but for the fact of Incarnation, may serve to show us—from the example of the most patient and profound spiritual seeking in all human history—that a full appreciation of the significance of the Light does not stop, with Plato, at the conclusion that the Light is the self-revealing in the world of a personal God, but goes forward with Christianity to the assertion that if God is personal, if He is good, this self-revealing must reach its crown in Incarnation.

In the past the Children of the Light have reached their faith chiefly through a study of the Jewish *preparatio evangelica*. High and noble as were the lessons which God taught men through this Jewish *preparatio* (and especially through

such prophets as Hosea and the author of the Book of Jonah), the time has come when we should devote serious study, perhaps somewhat along the lines briefly sketched above, to the *preparatio* carried through in Greece and in India.

XVII

The immensely significant conclusion reached in the *Gita* regarding the necessity of Incarnation is to be considered, I believe, somewhat after the following manner:—

We know that God is the personal Spirit of beauty, goodness and truth. We know that the Light is His likeness shining through the mists of our mortality—that it is the fruit of His Spirit creating within us His likeness, in the form of personal spirits that are true and beautiful and good. We know therefore that whenever we behold in the men around us anything which our souls immediately and spontaneously acclaim as true or beautiful or good, we are recognising the shining of the Light, and giving testimony that in ourselves also there is at least the capacity for appreciating and showing forth the same Light.

Now there is one quality above all others which men of every race and type, by the very fact of their being in existence at all, recognise as good and beautiful and true, and that is the quality of self-sacrificing love.

We could none of us have come into existence but for this quality, as it was incarnate in our mothers. Our race could never have risen above

the lowest brutes (or so we are told by those who know), but for this quality, in the maternal instinct. And all the way up, progress has come exactly in proportion as human beings have shown more and more capacity to sacrifice themselves for a whole larger than themselves.

There are vastly differing standards of good and evil amongst the various races of mankind, and one major cause of inter-racial friction—of the friction, for example, between Indian and European—is the fact of the existence of these diverse standards. But on one point all mankind are agreed, simply because any race which differed in this regard would not be able to exist, and that is on the point of what good motherhood means.

In other words, every race recognises perforce the sovereign excellence of self-sacrificing love.

XVIII

Last year a book appeared about India, which has been very widely read both in England and America; and in regard to which a large number of people have become so enthusiastic that they have evinced an entirely unprecedented zeal for giving it away free, as a tract. How many of the readers of that book were struck by a fact which stands out obviously in connection with it, but which has not been mentioned, so far as I know, in any of the numberless adverse reviews which have appeared concerning the book in question? The fact I refer to is this—that whilst on the one hand deploring the unnamable

contempt and ill-usage from which the women of India suffer, this book on the other hand assigns to them so completely autocratic a position at the heart of Indian life that even the best-educated and most freedom-loving of men are slavishly unable to break with ancient custom, owing to the decisive influence of these oppressed and despised chattels, their women.

I shall never forget the occasion, soon after I reached India, when I was reading the *Ramayana* with a very dear old friend of mine, long since dead, a man whose kindness and wisdom I rejoice to have the opportunity of mentioning here, Pandit Balwant Singh of Hoshangabad.

We came to a famous passage in which it is recorded that Ram, being given contrary orders by his father and mother, at once decided to obey the latter.

I asked the Pandit in surprise whether this would still be regarded by Hindus as the right course to follow under such circumstances; and I do not think I shall ever forget the impressiveness of the words in which he assured me that *because of the manner in which she has sacrificed herself for him* a Hindu always puts obedience to his mother before obedience to his father.

This will serve as an illustration of the fact that there is deep in the heart of humanity—and inevitably so, since man is born of woman—an inherent and unqualified confession of the sovereign truth, beauty and goodness of self-sacrificing love.

We who would be Children of the Light must believe that this is so because the Light shines most splendidly and plainly of all through such love. In other words, this universal confession is made because such love is true above all other truth (and by truth I mean not mere accordance with fact, but alignment with the deepest Divine purposes), because it is beautiful above all other beauty, and because it is good above all other goodness.

This quality, to which we owe our being, and to which humanity owes its being, is the Light of Godlikeness, the working of the Spirit of God, the very life of God Himself, above all else.

For God is Love.

XIX

It was along some such course of thinking, we may believe, that the Indian religious genius, which yields its highest fruit in the *Gita*, reached its great affirmation of the necessity for Incarnation. And it is at least a proposition worthy of consideration that this should be the manner in which we to-day, as those who aspire to be the Children of the Light, should approach the same great fact, without a due appreciation of whose significance our religious experience, and our every-day practice also, must remain thin and vague.

This line of approach was, incidentally, that followed by Browning in his "Saul." The fact of the impulse towards, and the capacity for, limitless self-sacrifice on the part of a human soul,

means not only that there must be the same highest good in God, but leads one on inevitably to the belief in Incarnation.

A past generation reached its faith in Incarnation, if it did reach it, through teaching which insisted upon the passive acceptance of certain dogmas, and upon the unhesitating confession of "belief" in certain miraculous occurrences of the distant past.

But times have changed. For better or for worse it is no longer possible that a living and working faith should thus be built up in us, or at any rate in the great majority of us. We have to experience the truth of doctrine or miracle for ourselves before we can say that we believe in them. The truth of doctrine and miracle may be, and must be, still thus experienced; but, if so, the old method of passive acceptance and confession must yield to this recognition of the Light.

The world never needed the message of the Light as it does to-day; and therefore there was never such necessity as there is to-day that the Children of the Light should be faithful to the truth which is their heritage.

XX

Here is this great fact of mother-love in the world, to which we all owe our being. And here are a thousand reflections of that love, in father-love, in all self-sacrifice willingly and gallantly undertaken and carried through for the sake of others. At the heart of the highest form of such

self-sacrifice is the willingness to risk, and even to suffer, death itself for the sake of the beloved—the willingness to leap for his saving from a world of safety and ease to an abyss of horror and desperate conflict.

We all know, deep down in our hearts, that such self-sacrifice is the finest thing in the world : that we account it the highest good, the deepest truth, the most splendid beauty: that we should deem ourselves fortunate indeed if death could come to us in this fashion.

Every now and then some incident happens which reminds us of the supreme sanction of such self-sacrifice—though indeed the fact is abroad in the world all the time in the simplest motherhood. Some tragedy occurs, perhaps on a river or in a coal-mine; and lives are laid down that others may live. And at once the voice of cynicism and worldliness is silent. There is no scoffing at, no indifference to *that*. All of us, whatever our race or creed, know instinctively and immediately that *that* at least is good, true, beautiful, holy, whatever else that is commonly called by these names may seem to us doubtful in motive and expression.

XXI

Believing therefore that this world exists for the manifestation of the Divine reality, in beauty, truth and goodness : and believing also that there is a faculty in the soul which calls forth a spontaneous recognition of this reality when it is

anywhere manifested around us, we shall find the moststriking and universal working of this faculty in the acknowledgment, everywhere and always, of the sovereign beauty, truth and goodness of self-sacrifice to the death on behalf of those who cannot help themselves.

It follows that this quality must be at the very heart of reality. It must be God's own nature breaking forth in unveiled and direct manifestation.

Consequently, whatever else we may say about the Divine Will and its workings, we must at least say this, that it loves : and that it loves sufficiently to give itself wholly in sacrifice for the sake of its beloved.

If God is to be God at all : if He is to be beauty, truth and goodness at all : if He is to be worth worshipping at all : if He is to be better than the meanest of human or pre-human mothers : if He is to be better than that dog at Herculaneum which died trying to shield its master from the burning ashes of the volcano, there *must* be this in God, this stripping of Himself, this coming down into the conflict by our side, this equal sharing of the dust and blood, this giving of Himself unto the death that we may live.¹

I do not see how any one can have borne for one moment any of the weight of humanity's toil and anguish : or, on the other hand, can have felt for one moment alight within him the exquisite

¹ The word for incarnation in Sanskrit and its derived languages means a "coming down."

and ineffable joy which comes from the witnessing of some action of true self-sacrifice (and from the endeavour to share it a little), and have known the irrefragable conviction that this at least is supremely good, without following some such path of thought and experience as that suggested here.

God is no God for us, unless there is this in Him—this impulse for, and actuality of, final and complete self-sacrifice, which we name Incarnation.

What is the use of speaking vaguely about beauty, truth or goodness to a world which has felt the weight of sin and suffering as we felt it in the war? What is the use of speaking vaguely about beauty, truth and goodness to a man who knows the appalling ferocity of bestial impulse in his own heart? What is the use of speaking vaguely about beauty, truth or goodness to a man who has seen a mother die for her child? Religion remains a philosophising, a beautiful and ineffectual angel, as Platonism remained, until it advances to the belief not merely that God is a personal Spirit, but that He is the Origin of this universal acknowledgment of the supreme goodness of self-sacrificing love, because *that* is His own nature above all else, because He strips Himself to save His beloved, even unto the death.

God is no God for us, unless somewhere in the long agony of our race's history, in fact and deed, He came down and died to save us: and unless that self-sacrificing love is eternally His heart and will. Unless He did this, and is this, He is a tyrant to be defied, an Absolute to be argued away,

an out-grown bugbear to be derided, a nothing to be neglected.

But if He did this, and is this, He is All in All, now and for ever, to all humanity.

XXII

This is the road along which, as I believe, the Children of the Light will travel to an understanding of the necessity, the undying and ever-creative splendour of the Incarnation.

But why Christ, rather than Krishna, or the man who died to save a drowning child last week, or (for the matter of that) that big dog "Delta" which died trying to save his master at Herculaneum? Did not all of these incarnate the sovereign divinity of self-sacrificing love?

I do not believe it is needful or desirable for the Children of the Light to enter into any form of controversy with the object of proving that this or that manifestation of the Light is incomplete. In the first place such an effort is negative, and therefore sterile; and in the second place it is bad tactics psychologically, since it leads inevitably to a defence of the incomplete instead of to an acknowledgment of its incompleteness.

But if one recognises, as the *Gita* does, a variety of incarnations, and the possibility that any good and self-sacrificing man is a new incarnation, in the fullest sense, of the Supreme, one is immediately faced by the problem of standard. What is one to do, where does one stand, when these incarnations differ on fundamentals?

The problem is a very genuine one. Within my own time in India two great men have been hailed as incarnations of the Supreme, one of whom taught that the British should be fought by any and every means and at all costs, whilst the other said that they should be conquered not by fighting but by soul-force. Here is a fundamental discrepancy, not merely in tactics, but in the deepest principles ; for a love that is wholly self-sacrificing cannot be believed to bid one both to destroy and not to destroy the evil-doer.

The illustration may appear to be an unduly simple one, but it is really fundamental. In this most sacred of all matters, the self-expression of God to man, we *must* have a single authoritative norm. We *must* have someone by the side of whom we may line up all the other great men, and decide at once where they are to be classed. We *must* have a final and ultimate standard, not only of the love itself (for love may be fond and foolish), but of the kind of life and activity through which that love is expressed. We *must* have a final and ultimate standard of character, of will, of the working out of love's purposes. We *must*, to put the matter in a word, have the Cross, where Divine love faced the worst for man, naked, defenceless : where, knowing itself to possess the power of establishing righteousness by force, it deliberately refused to employ that power, because otherwise it would not be love, it would not be Divine.

There is the standard, the norm.

In the men around us, in the heroes and saints of the past, in the great figures acclaimed as incarnations by the followers of different religions, we may—and shall—joyfully acknowledge the bright shining of the Light of Godlikeness. But—Godlikeness is Christlikeness. The Cross is final. And when an “incarnation” calls for fire and sword against the evil-doer (or for the assassin’s knife) the Spirit within us bears witness that this is not Godlike, because it is not Christlike, not in harmony with the Cross.

XXIII

Thus, on the one hand, the Children of the Light will come to the conclusion that the universal acknowledgment of the sovereign beauty, truth and goodness of self-sacrificing love means that at some point in history God must strip Himself, and come down amongst us, and die for us. For otherwise either the witness within us is a liar in leading all men to regard such love as the highest good, or else there is no God who is as worthy of the name of God as the meanest mother-creature which dies for its young.

On the other hand, the Children of the Light will recognise the necessity for a norm in regard to this principle of incarnation—the necessity for a decisive and definitive Act of God, showing us with ultimate authority *how* God works for us : showing us, in brief, the Cross. For otherwise the very idea of Incarnation becomes meaningless

amongst the multitudes who are acclaimed as incarnations; and men wander in doubt, like sheep without a shepherd, having no guide to show them what is really God's way and God's will, or even what the name "God" itself means.

Where you have no such norm, even among the followers of the *Gita*, you have elephant-headed creatures, creatures with strings of skulls round their necks, small-pox demons, worshipped as God.

XXIV

But there is another aspect under which we may regard this matter.

We have spoken much of beauty, truth and goodness. But where is our standard by which to judge of these splendid and ultimate realities? To some of our fellow-countrymen, quite honestly, the most beautiful thing in the world is a mug of beer: it claims the enthusiastic assent of their souls in much the same way in which the Idea of the Good claimed the enthusiastic assent of Plato's soul.

There are other human beings to whom the most beautiful thing in the world is a grotesque idol, or a smoked and pickled human head; and there are others for whom a materialistic philosophy, or a bestial cult, are the truth.

Moreover, in the sphere of goodness, whilst all acknowledge the sovereignty here of self-sacrificing love, because all have had mothers, outside that single great affirmation we shall find

disagreements so fundamental that, as has just been suggested, one man will say that self-sacrificing love bids you assassinate your country's enemies, whilst another will teach you that it makes you bear with them patiently, and conquer them by "soul force."

Obviously the Children of the Light are here also in desperate need of a norm, a standard; and the history of the belief in the Light, from the days of Plato downwards—or from the earlier day when the idea of the Divine indwelling first broke in upon the mind of India—proves unmistakably that this question of a standard whereby we may judge and appraise the manifestations of the Divine beauty, truth and goodness, is absolutely fundamental to all genuine progress in the knowledge of the Light.

Plato himself acutely realised the need in question; and a very large proportion of his writings are devoted to the endeavour to discover such a standard, especially in regard to goodness (he was quite frank in his belief that the beautiful must be judged by the standard of the good, and that the true is derived from and remains dependent upon the good). This is why the greatest of his Dialogues all come round to the ever-recurring query, What is Righteousness? And Plato's instinct in regard to this unending search was not in error; for all through history what may be called (for want of a better term) the mystical consciousness has trodden an insecure pathway

between the marshes of antinomianism on the one hand, and the rocky wastes of an arid asceticism on the other, whilst at every step along the pathway there have been souls once earnest in the quest who have wandered away and been lost on one side or the other.

The necessity for this norm whereby we may evaluate the goodness which is the ultimate beauty and truth is perhaps especially obvious in the East; but the early history of the Quaker community demonstrates the same need quite clearly, and one of the greatest of the debts which the Society of Friends owes to George Fox is the fact that he laid such insistent emphasis upon the truth that the needed standard is to be found in a continual reference, on the part of the community as a whole, to the Spirit and Light of Christ.

For it is there, and there alone, that the norm is to be discovered which humanity needs so sorely. One realises when one has lived for years in the midst of people with alien faith and traditions how vague and even meaningless it is to speak to them of the beautiful, the true, the good; for the conceptions which these great terms call up in their minds are in so many respects entirely different from the conceptions which they call up in one's own, that the attempt is apt to end in despairing futility. Conversely, one realises increasingly that Eastern conceptions of the beautiful, the true, the good, although they may differ widely from those of the West, have in

them elements—numerous and valuable elements—which our conceptions (at any rate as embodied in a practical and working code) conspicuously lack. Indian music, and the message of the *Gita* concerning disregard for the fruits of action, will serve as illustrations for this deep differentiation, which is founded in diversity of standard.

What I mean is best summed up by saying that we shall never comprehend the fulness of the stature of Christ till we have gained from every race and nation their own individual contribution to that comprehension.

XXV

For although it leads to confusion, at any rate at the present stage of contact, to speak in an abstract manner of beauty, truth and goodness, because the conceptions which these terms denote differ so widely, there is something of which one can speak, and speak concretely and simply, and in a manner calculated both to win ready comprehension and to elicit co-operation and contribution: and that something is Christ-likeness.

There is here a common factor, a standard, which the Light in men of every type, if they are in the slightest degree earnest in the search for truth, leads them to acknowledge as sovereign. A life like *that* Life, they will all recognise, is a thing of surpassing truth, of sovereign beauty, of supreme goodness. It shows the workings of a will wholly enthusiastic for the Divine

beauty, wholly concerned with the manifestation of the Divine truth, wholly responsive and obedient to the Divine Love. It is the final standard.

This is why, although the members of other faiths so frequently spurn and condemn Christianity, and the Christian Church, and the travesty we have made of Christian civilisation, you will find the adjective "Christlike" used not uncommonly in non-Christian writings to denote just what we denote by it, whilst the words "a true Christian" are used by anyone who knows about Christ, however devoted he may be to his own non-Christian faith, for one who is really living out the Light of Christ.

Christlikeness is the standard we need. Our task in the world is the establishment of Christlikeness. This is the enterprise which the creative Spirit of God is carrying forward through us, and through all humanity, in all ages.

XXVI

These things are clearer, perhaps, in the East.

One comes back wearied from profitless word-splitting and barren controversy (if one is foolish enough to engage in it), conscious of a yawning gulf between oneself and the people whom one would serve: and conscious also that the cause of the existence of this gulf is the disparity of standards, the lack of agreement on fundamental definitions, above all in regard to these great

realities, the beauty, truth and goodness which are the ultimate facts of the spiritual world.

One comes back wearied from that fruitless task to another task, and to one that is extraordinarily fruitful—the task of painting, in word and (a little) in deed, a portrait of Christ, so that one may say “Look at that: that is what beauty, truth and goodness mean in the spiritual sphere: that is what Christ means: and that is what we should be like.”

Nor is this a task which is urgent in the East only, where there is child-marriage and untouchability. Who shall say that it is not needed as much in the West, where science has been harnessed by the depraved will of man to the ends of a refined ingeniousness in destruction, so that the modern state is permanently equipped with the means of destroying millions of lives in a few brief hours?

East and West the need is the same—the return to an absolute standard of what human life should be like, and the deliberate, life-long endeavour, on the part of as many individuals and as many groups as can possibly be enlisted in the task, to attain that standard, which is the standard of Christlikeness.

XXVII

The Light, then, is focussed in Christlikeness. Christlikeness is the norm, both of God and man. Without Christlikeness, which means without self-giving unto death in Christ, God will

not be God: and without Christlikeness, which means life in Christ, man will not be true man.

There is one element in the teaching of Christ which must be dealt with here, His teaching regarding the Fatherhood of God.

In India we are not infrequently asked why it was that Christ did not speak of the Motherhood of God; for (as I have already pointed out) the authority of the mother is there put above that of the father, because of the greater self-sacrifice which her life shows forth.

The best answer to such an enquiry is probably to point out that in Judæa the position of women was so low that (according to one school of teaching) a woman could be divorced if she cooked her husband's dinner badly. In such an environment Christ could not use the category of "motherhood" in describing God's character to His simple hearers, without creating confusion of thought.

But it is obvious that Christ never intended, by calling God Father, to take from our conception of Godhead any element of truth, beauty or goodness which our minds can possibly comprehend; and therefore (though the term is an awkward one) we shall comprehend His conception of the Divine nature better if, when we speak of the Fatherhood of God, we understand by that phrase the Parenthood of God—that is, a view of God's nature in which with the strength and wisdom of true fatherhood are blended the tenderness, the self-sacrifice, the patience, the deathless love of motherhood. There are many of us who can

understand something of what this means, because having lost one of our parents when we were small, we found in the surviving parent, father or mother, as the case might be, all that both might have given.

XXVIII

Christ's sovereign teaching of the Light is this: that when we set out to define God, to bring the vision of the Divine nature and love to human hearts, the best way of so doing is to say: "Imagine the very best, wisest, most loving, most beautiful human parenthood that you possibly can imagine—here is the sort of thing I mean, the fatherhood of the father of the Prodigal Son. Now remember that God is like that, only infinitely better, wiser, more loving, more beautiful."

This teaching of Christ is the supreme sanction for the Children of the Light, the sovereign authority which tells them that their method of pointing to the best in humanity as a manifestation of the Divine is eternally the right method.

But in all probability there are very few, even to-day, after two thousand years of this sovereign teaching of truth in the parable of the Prodigal Son, who really take Christ at His word in this respect, and take the trouble (for that is what it amounts to) to think themselves into the attitude of mind which this evangel of the Light demands.

How many of us *really* believe, even now,

that the fundamental reality behind the universe is not a vague Absolute, nor an all-powerful dictator, but a Spirit as close, tender, loving, as our mother was when we climbed upon her knees as little children—a Spirit as wise, strong, loving as our father.

What evil could stand for long before a body of people who really believed this, not with the conviction of the mind alone, but with the personal experience of the heart and life?

Here, pressing in upon us is this vast fact of the Divine love in *that* sense (for that is enough)—the sense of perfect human parenthood. It is here, for us to apprehend and enjoy, and above all to use, for the founding of the City of God.

XXIX

Thus the teaching of Christ concerning the Light is fundamentally this: that there exists on earth a relationship, parenthood, which is a mirror of the eternal fact of the love of God for men's souls. Let no man in any age dare to assert that human nature is hopelessly depraved; for Christ Himself spoke of the parenthood of God, and in so speaking showed that the commonest things in the world, the primal human relationships, may be in themselves genuine vehicles of the Divine, bearing with them spiritual values which are eternal.

But Christ taught also that the parent-child relationship is the manifestation of the Light not from one side only, that of the parent, but from

both sides. For again and again he made it clear that the attitude of a little child to its parent, if parent and child are right, is in itself a Divine thing.

We generally consider this truth only from one point of view, that of the teaching that unless we are like little children, we shall not be able to have converse and communion with God. This of course is true; but the teaching in question carries with it this other truth, that little children show the Light of Christlikeness; for nothing can have true converse with God (as Christ taught that those whose hearts are genuinely childlike can) unless there is a real oneness of spiritual nature, an acceptance of the same values, a manifestation of the same Spirit of goodness, truth and beauty, on both sides.

Christ saw in a child's trustfulness, purity, innocence, simplicity, beauty, the triumphant working of the Divine creator-spirit, the Light of the being of God Himself. He saw also the manifestation of another deathless reality, the relationship which must exist between every soul in which the Light shines conqueringly, and the Source of that Light.

Therefore Christ taught that we must become like little children: that the Spirit which burns so radiantly through them, creating the Light of Christlikeness in purity, trustfulness, simplicity, must burn also through us, creating the same Light: and that we must constantly bring ourselves back to the saving knowledge that our souls

should stand towards God in exactly the same way in which a true child stands towards a true parent. There are to be no reservations, no clouds upon our intimacy with Him. We are continually to be going to God for help, for strength, for the realisation once more of His love, just as a child goes to its parent. We are to fall asleep at night, and awake in the morning, in the amazingly satisfying certainty that He loves us more deeply, is closer to us, is more entirely all that our souls need of love, tenderness and strength, than the best memories we can ever have of our earthly parents.

If the Light of childlikeness thus shines in us, prayer will become the act of a child in coming to its mother, that it may receive once more from her embrace the assurance of all-conquering, all-satisfying love.

XXX

To those of us especially who have the memory of a parent-child relationship in the past which seems to us to have been—at least from the side of the parent—entirely perfect, Christ's teaching of the Light through this relationship comes with extraordinary force and beauty.

As we recall this aspect and that of our relationship to father and mother in the old days, as we realise something of what that helpful comradeship meant to our development in mind, will and character: and as we remember that the soul which gave these great gifts, and

through whom the Light shone to us so clearly, is now "with God," we are able to recognise not only the sovereign glory of this teaching concerning the Light in human relationships, but what it actually means for ourselves regarding eternal life.

We can exclaim, "There is *that* in God : *that* which meant everything to me is what God is ; and the rich wonder that I knew has gone home to its Source and Exemplar in Him, where its values are conserved eternally, making God Himself richer."

For, as Plotinus says, "Nothing that really is can ever perish." The Light shines here or there amongst us. It is the Light of God's own nature kindled in our world. It is eternal. The glass through which it shines may be shattered. The beauty of sunset passes away and is gone. The glory of the rainbow fades. The brain that knew and followed the highest truth must perish and be dust. The child that was radiant yesterday with a beauty and joy that is truly Divine may lie gasping in death to-morrow. Decay and destruction seize irrevocably the material instrument of the Divine purpose, however cunningly wrought ; for otherwise there could be no continuity of progress. The harmony seems to our outward ears to cease. The Light seems to our outward eyes to be quenched. But it is only seeming. The Light is eternal. Nothing to all eternity can alter the fact, not only that it shone here on earth in this soul and that soul ;

but that it shines on for ever in God, its Source and Home, in Whom we may see and know our dear ones even better than on earth.

XXXI

In truth, this Light of the Divine beauty, truth and goodness, this Light of Christlikeness, is the only thing which really is ; for it is God Himself fulfilling His purposes of self-expression through materiality.

This is why, again and again, as we go through the world, we are suddenly dazzled and amazed by the blazing up of the Light in this soul or that. Even in the most unlikely of mankind we perceive, entirely unexpectedly, some action, some trait of character, which the mysterious faculty within us (the faculty which Plato called "recollection") immediately recognises as a shining of the Light of Christlikeness ; and at once we know that this is the real man : this is why he was born : this is God in him, struggling to be freed : this *is*, and is eternally.

The recognition of this real existence is always an experience of the deepest joy to the recognising soul.

As our lives go on, we shall realise that there is this element of real being, this shining of the Light, in everyone whom we meet, however gross and selfish ; and we shall know more and more certainly that this is the eternal element in man. In all we shall recognise some measure of success

achieved by the Divine Workman ; and we shall echo with a new conviction the great word, " I saw the Light shine through all."

XXXII

We shall enjoy, from time to time, a somewhat similar experience in our contact with nature. Perhaps out in the forest, or on the mountains, we shall suddenly become aware, not only that the Light of the Divine beauty and joy is shining through the material world around us ; but that the Light so shining is the only thing which truly is. Our eyes will suddenly become enlightened ; and we shall see the fair external world as a living whole, as a Face through which there shines to us in unmistakable certainty and splendour the Light of the beauty of God.

Many of the great thinkers and scientists of mankind have recorded that it is with a somewhat similar joy in illumination that they have discovered this or that natural law. They have seen the Light as truth. They have realised that in their work of discovery they have been re-thinking the thoughts of God : and success has made them joyful with the supreme joy, the joy of the recognition of God in His handiwork. This is why Herbert Spencer spoke of devotion to science as a tacit worship—a silent recognition of supreme worth in the things studied, and by implication in their cause. It is why Agassiz spoke of the study of nature as an intercourse with the highest mind.

In a wider sense, all true creative work for beauty, truth and goodness is a manifesting of the Light, and bears with it the exalted joy of a sharing in the Divine activity. The work of artist or poet is the manifestation of the Light as beauty, just as that of thinker or scientist is the manifestation of the Light as truth.

But in relation to the manifestation of the Light as goodness—the highest of all its manifestations—we are all to be artists, aiding in the creative effort of the Spirit of God to establish Christlikeness upon earth.

For though they recognise in the Light Divine the only thing which truly has existence, the Children of the Light are by no means enslaved to a vague optimism, which regards pain and evil as nought but illusion. They know that the cosmic effort of the creative Spirit of God is a warfare for Christlikeness against all that is un-Christlike; and that the Light can only shine truly in themselves through their sharing in the same purpose. Therefore they go out to live and die for the City of God.

XXXIII

In the prosecution of this unending task there is obvious need that the Children of the Light should study continually the records of their Exemplar's life and work, submitting themselves day by day, in a spirit of humble teachableness, to the influence of his Spirit of service and love, and striving to model their own

activities upon the story of his self-sacrifice for humanity.

There is pre-eminent need also that the Children of the Light should give themselves time to allow the Divine Spirit to work upon their minds in the quietness and strength of silent devotion, and to build up in them by his own creative artistry "the mind that was in Christ Jesus." In our headlong modern world the temptation to allow these periods of quiet to be crowded out is almost irresistible ; but we must cling to them as a drowning man clings to a straw ; for they are the very stuff of eternal life to our souls.

Again, there is a deep need that in their corporate worship the Children of the Light should return again and again to fundamentals, should refresh their souls, and strengthen them for their combat against evil and pain, by the joint vision of the Light of Christ. Nothing can shake, no wrong can for long endure before, a company of men and women who individually and corporately seek and behold in living power the splendour of that Light.

XXXIV

Thus the Children of the Light will go through the world, united in the experience of the Light, and in fellowship with Christ, and knowing that their task in life is to assist in God's great enterprise of creating His likeness, of manifesting His beauty, truth and goodness. They will believe

that God is for ever striving for the realisation of His values, and that this means above all else, since He is a personal Spirit, the creation of Christlikeness.

They will believe also that in every soul the Light of Christlikeness is to be seen in some measure enkindled : and that their duty is to co-operate with God in releasing the true man into free activity in each life which they may touch.

But what of the enemy in this eternal endeavour ? What of the evil and sin, which so often appear utterly to blot out the Light, and to turn all God's working to futility ?

In the first place, the Children of the Light will be immovable believers in progress ; and they will be so not merely because they can look back and see what vast areas have been conquered for God in the past, not merely because they are aware, for example, that one hundred years ago, in England herself, votes were publicly bought and sold, small children were worked for twelve or even fifteen hours a day in pitch darkness in the mines, and little boys were sent up chimneys where they were not infrequently burnt to death, because the sweeping-machines " made too much dirt in the house." The Children of the Light will be believers in progress because they know, from their own immediate inner experience, that God is working in the world for beauty, truth and goodness. They will turn again and again to the spirit of those great words in the *Timaeus*,

“ Let me tell you why the Creator made this world. . . . He was good, and He desired that all things should be as like Himself as they could be.” They will know that saying to be a great Word of final and ultimate truth. They will know it, not because they have read it in Plato or elsewhere, but because their spirits have been touched by the Creative God, and because they are conscious that they have themselves been harnessed (unprofitable servants though they know themselves to be) to the same eternal task. They will know that they are called to be builders of the City of God : and that this City is from all ages, a spiritual reality, ever drawing nearer to perfect realisation upon earth. It is a Thought of God, which may take countless generations for its fulfilment ; but which nevertheless governs all life, because mankind exists that it may be fulfilled.

Knowing these things, the Children of the Light will not be appalled by the vastness of the work which remains to be done before the City is a reality in all the world. The worse the evil around them, the grosser the darkness, the blacker the denials of God’s love, the darker the blaspheming against His beauty, truth and goodness, the more will they be flung back upon Him, and so brought to a living knowledge of His power ; for it is always true that lack of faith in progress is caused by lack of faith in God, and by lack of contact with Him.

XXXV

In the second place, when the Children of the Light realise afresh the immense strength of the forces which fight against God, the overwhelming mass of grossness, truthlessness and evil which seems to blot out the Light Divine, they will come back again and again to the Cross, where the Light shines perfectly. These dark and filthy things meant *that* to God. *That* in God is what conquers them ; and as we, poor weak soldiers as we are, go down to the fight with anything at all of the Spirit of the Cross inspiring our will, we may go under in the confused and desperate *mêlée*, as Christ did, (if so, thrice-fortunate is our lot), but at least we shall be real men.

For the Spirit of the Cross is the Divine Light of Christlikeness in full and perfect manifestation ; and we only partake of real manhood in so far as we fulfil God's purpose in showing forth that Light, which is God Himself.

The Cross is eternal. The power and will to bear it exist to some degree in every human heart : and there is none, however base, who has not at least some capacity for recognising the supreme value of such self-sacrifice.

Therefore the Children of the Light go forth in the Spirit of the Cross to awaken in all men the sleeping power of the bearing of the Cross, that so all may come to co-operate in God's purpose of building that City which can only be built through unstinting self-sacrifice.

XXXVI

The evil may abound ; but God's love abounds yet more ; and to all eternity that love can never end, can never be defeated, because it *is* God.

The Light is above all *that* love, still forcing men out to the bearing of the Cross ; for this is the supreme Christlikeness, the supreme Godlikeness. And the Children of the Light are above all Cross-bearers—men and women who go forth to the conquest of evil, and to the fulfilment of God's will for Christlikeness, in the spirit of the Cross, conquering evil by good, destroying hatred by love, and so showing forth the Light of Christ.

Christ, the incarnate God, is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. He alone, as historic exemplar, as present Saviour, as eternal source and substance of the Light, is the Hope of the World. Whether we wake or sleep, we must live together with Him, that His Light may shine through us to His world.